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FM AMEMBASSY NICOSIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8275
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NICOSIA 000863

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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/29/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CY](#) [UK](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: CYPRIOTS FREAK OVER UK-TURKEY AGREEMENT

REF: SCHLICHER-BRYZA EMAIL 10/29/07

Classified By: Ambassador Ronald Schlicher, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: "Relations with UK Hit New Low" screamed Nicosia's English-language daily October 25. The cause? Island-related elements of the recent "Strategic Partnership Agreement" between the United Kingdom and Turkey that codified the countries' desires to help end the isolation of Turkish Cypriots (and thus enflamed the Greek Cypriot majority). Official Nicosia and the political opposition joined the fray, with all demanding that Cyprus respond forcefully to the British affront. All options remain on the table, Foreign Ministry contacts revealed, even those regarding the British Sovereign Base Areas (SBAs). Further, Foreign Minister Marcoullis has urged that no similar declaration emerge from the November 5 Bush-Erdogan meeting in Washington. British High Commission counterparts, expecting the RoC to pick at least one fight in the run-up to February's presidential elections, were not surprised by the Cypriot saber-rattling, but hope to lower temperatures and thus preserve the strategic benefits afforded Her Majesty's Government (and USG) by the SBAs. END SUMMARY.

Agreement Far-Reaching...But Only Cyprus Elements Matter

¶2. (U) Prime Ministers Gordon Brown and Recep Tayyip Erdogan met in London October 23. Agreeing that their countries shared close ties and common perspectives and that the relationship was "of growing and crucial importance," the leaders' "Turkey / United Kingdom Strategic Partnership 2007/8" document committed them to regular consultations on shared concerns. The list of priorities included strengthening bilateral trade, defense, and cultural ties, tackling climate change, improving counter-terrorism cooperation, and fostering Ankara's bid for European Union membership.

¶3. (SBU) Most Cypriots ignored those commitments to focus on Bullet 2: "(The parties commit to) help end the isolation of the Turkish Cypriots -- and encourage others in the international community to join us in our efforts." Expounding in subsequent pages, the agreement mandates the following: a) Support for the UN Secretary General's Good Offices mission and his efforts to achieve a Cyprus settlement; b) Efforts within the EU and bilaterally to promote direct contacts between Turkish Cypriots and the EU / UK; c) High-level contacts with Turkish Cypriot authorities; d) Assistance to "TRNC" authorities and universities in their attempts to engage with the Bologna Process; e) A push for Turkish Cypriot representation in the European Parliament; and f) implementation of the UK's bilateral aid program for Turkish Cypriots, and UK support for similar EU efforts for

the T/C community.

Rivals Close Ranks Against Common Enemy

¶4. (SBU) As expected on an island where words often count more than actions, reactions to the accord proved harsh and hyperbolic. Most claimed that London had "upgraded" the "TRNC" by its mere mention in an official policy document. "Partitionist logic" ran throughout the text, argued Government Spokesman Vassilis Palmas October 24, "preserving the effects of the Turkish invasion and occupation." In response, Nicosia would act calmly but decisively to protect its national interests. Mainstream media piled on with accusations that Britain finally had put on paper what it had been practicing for many years -- bias favoring Turkish Cypriots and the Turkish "invaders." And the island's resident conspiracy theorists concluded that Erdogan had won Brown's concessions on northern Cyprus in exchange for Turkey not invading northern Iraq.

¶5. (SBU) Opposition figures briefly ceased their campaign-related attacks and formed a common front. Both left-wing leader Dimitris Christofias and right-wing counterpart Nikos Anastasiades condemned the British stance as unacceptable. Both saw an opening to make political hay shortly thereafter, however. Christofias asserted that the government "no longer could preempt negative developments on the Cyprus Problem," urging voters to give the island a fresh start. Anastasiades lambasted the Papadopoulos administration for mismanaging Cypriot foreign policy, continuously fighting fires instead of preventing them.

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Foreign Ministry Employing Biggest Guns

¶6. (C) Media reported that Foreign Minister Erato Marcoullis administered a severe tongue-lashing on resident UK High Commissioner Peter Millet October 24. She seemingly failed to finish the task, since Embassy officials spotted her and Millet locked in verbal fisticuffs at a UN Day celebration the same evening. Maria Michael, a counselor in the MFA's Cyprus Question division, subsequently provided us a readout of her boss's discussions and Cyprus's position on the UK-Turkey agreement. "Relations with Britain can never be the same," asserted Michael. For the first time, Britain had laid bare its pro-Turkey, pro-partition policies for all to see.

¶7. (C) President Papadopoulos's calm visage belied a seething interior, Michael revealed; he had ordered Marcoullis to energize the Ministry in identifying a proper response. It would not be knee-jerk, she promised -- Cyprus would not oppose Britain in EU or international fora out of spite, for example. But it would be harsh, commensurate with the damage the Turkey accord had wrought. Up first for inspection, if not eventual abrogation, was the Cyprus-UK "Structured Dialogue" which called for the sides to cooperate on matters ranging from immigration to public health. And the SBAs most certainly would figure high in the analysis.

Much Ado About Nothing? Not Here

¶8. (C) UNFICYP Political Officer Tim Alchin encapsulated the views of the diplomatic community in claiming that, "in calling for the lifting of the isolation, there is nothing controversial here. Most EU member states think the same." UK High Commission official David Reed echoed Alchin's points October 25, while acknowledging the Foreign Office's wordsmiths had not distinguished themselves in their sparing

use of quotes and liberal mention of "TRNC authorities." That a major bilateral spat had occurred during election season surprised no one at the UKHC, Reed noted -- in their 2007 "Risk Report," they assumed the President would pick a fight for electoral reasons. The RoC had reacted predictably to the Britain-Turkey accord by making unspecified threats to the SBAs, he added. The bases' legal status was solid, however, thus limiting the Cypriots to harassment actions.

¶9. (C) In an October 29 call on the Ambassador, High Commissioner Millet admitted to a coordination breakdown within Her Majesty's Government. He was as flabbergasted as anyone upon seeing the text the first time -- on the Foreign Office website, after the story had broken. Marcoullis's words in private had rung even harsher than her public remarks, he revealed, with the Foreign Minister insisting the British policy portended partition. Millet was attempting to buy time with his Cypriot interlocutors and avert a major retaliatory initiative against the bases.

Leaving No Diplomatic Stone Unturned

¶10. (C) With little warning, Marcoullis summoned the Ambassador early October 29 to discuss the UK-Turkish arrangement (Ref). While the RoC had found most of the text unexceptionable, she used "strategic betrayal" to describe those parts referring to Cyprus and the Turkish and British governments' intentions to ease Turkish Cypriot isolation and encourage high-level international contacts for "TRNC" authorities. The document contained ostensible proof that HMG was actively supporting the partition of the country in spite of its oft-stated policy encouraging reunification. Marcoullis also claimed the British, by agreeing to a joint declaration that did not mention or support the UN's July 8 process, were damaging prospects for progress on the UN front, and encouraging Turkey's recent rhetorical shift away from a federation achieved via the UN negotiating process.

¶11. (C) Marcoullis next turned to PM Erdogan's November 5 visit Washington, urging that no similar, Cyprus-related statement emerge from the leaders' meeting. "We certainly want you to succeed in lowering tensions regarding the PKK in northern Iraq," the FM continued, "but we also ask that you resist any Turkish effort to make Cyprus a bargaining chip on other issues." RoC Ambassador to the United States Kakouris would be making similar demarches in the Department, DoD, and NSC, she informed, and perhaps employing Cyprus's "friends"

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on Capitol Hill as well. The Ambassador promised to pass on her concerns about possible references to Cyprus, but also reminded her that the U.S. continued to support measures designed to ease the isolation of the T/C community and upgrade their human and economic capacities as a means of facilitating reunification.

¶12. (C) Taking advantage of an opportunity to press our counter-terrorism agenda, the Ambassador suggested that Kakouris's representations be prefaced by him detailing whatever efforts Cyprus was taking against PKK sympathizers on the island. The minister herself might coordinate with her law-enforcement colleagues to crack down further on PKK-friendly fundraising possibly taking place on the island. Marcoullis replied that Cyprus considers the PKK a terrorist organization, as does the EU as a whole, but that, contrary to "malicious" press reporting of PKK training camps in the Troodos Mountains, there was zero evidence that PKK operations are hatched in or launched from Cyprus.

Comment

¶13. (C) Few incidents better put into perspective the danger

of inappropriate Cyprus terminology than this latest UK-RoC dust-up. MFA officer Michael put it best, arguing "it doesn't matter that the accord contained nothing new. It's on paper, so it's important." Politically, Cypriots' outrage seems to be boosting the President's fortunes. His polling continues to stay strong, according to recent surveys. Further, the opposition's attempts to use Britain's call to reduce T/C isolation as additional proof of Papadopoulos's misguided foreign and CyProb policies generally have failed. We would thus expect the President to milk this conflict for all its electoral worth. Such a strategy negatively affects U.S. interests, however, especially if Cyprus moves in some way against the SBAs, which provide the USG with vital support for the War on Terrorism and operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Post will provide thoughts on helping the UK (and us) to mitigate this fallout septel.

SCHLICHER